Acorn

ISSUE 18 CHRISTMAS 1990

NEWS LETTER

Merry Christmas, Everyone

A personal message from Sam

We've come to the end of yet another busy and eventful year, and despite the general economic difficulties it has been a successful and productive year for Acorn.

We have launched the first of our ARM 3-based products – A540 and R260 – through our new business units. We have begun to re-establish ourselves in the home market – particularly with the Learning Curve package – and in the area of professional solutions. We have established our own subsidiaries in Australia and New Zealand and have welcomed to Acorn 30 new colleagues from those countries. We have sold the 100,000th ARM-based machine – the Archimedes and its Unix cousins are now well established in the marketplace. And we have also begun to work productively with Olivetti Office to establish a significant and sustainable role for Acorn within the Olivetti group. And perhaps most pleasing – all of the above has been achieved in the context of a clearly stated vision of Acorn becoming the best personal computer company in Europe.

Let me thank each and every one of you for your commitment and support during this year. In my new role I have personally appreciated your help very much indeed and I look forward to us working together next year to achieve, in more public terms, the success that Acorn deserves.

I wish you and your families a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Sam.

Sam Wauchope

BBQ and swim for Kiwis

With thanks (and apologies) to Good King Wenceslas

Good King Douglas he looked out,
On the Feast of Yuletide.
All his staff lay round about,
Sunbathing by his poolside.
Brightly shone the sun that day
And frosty were the Steinies,
Then a fax from Acorn came
Requesting 'prompt reply' please!

Could you give us half a page
on Christmas-time Downunder,
How's it different over there
From Cambridge, we all wonder?
Douglas turned to good John B.:
'John what's your idea?'
John just said, 'I need to think . . .
Pass another bee-ee-eer.

Annette said let's tell the truth,
It rains on Christmas Day here.
(But she was born in Kent so what
would she know anyway dear!)
Mark and Mark and Jeremy
Lit the barbecu-ue,
Threw the steak and sausies on,
Eggs and onions too-oo-oo.

David, Ainsley, Ken, and Bryan
Played cricket (just one over),
Drank cold wine, ate Christmas
Ham,
Turkey and Pavlova.
Jo and Russell threw Cherie
Half-naked in the po-ol,
She didn't mind the sun was hot . . .
the water clear and co-ol.

Soon the afternoon was gone,
the article neglected.
On lazy sunny summer days,
What else could be expected?
So the deadline came and went,
Sorry that you missed us;
Time to end so farewell all . . .
And have a MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Tidings to gladden the heart

In the build-up to Christmas, all our hopes are firmly set on Learning Curve. So far, all the signs look extremely promising.

You will remember we launched a new advertising campaign in the national press and on regional TV earlier this year. Now that we have the results of this campaign we can report that some ten thousand people asked for more information. Of these, a staggering 19% either bought Learning Curve or another Acorn product.

Of particular significance in the run-up to Christmas is that studies carried out by KA Research in October revealed that some 50% of those people who responded to the campaign said they were still planning to buy Learning Curve within the next few months. The remaining 31% had either purchased another computer or were no longer interested.

Encouraged by these statistics, which confirm our campaign is reaching the right people, our marketing department is now running a similar advertising campaign. Early response has been very promising and we're very optimistic about good Christmas sales.

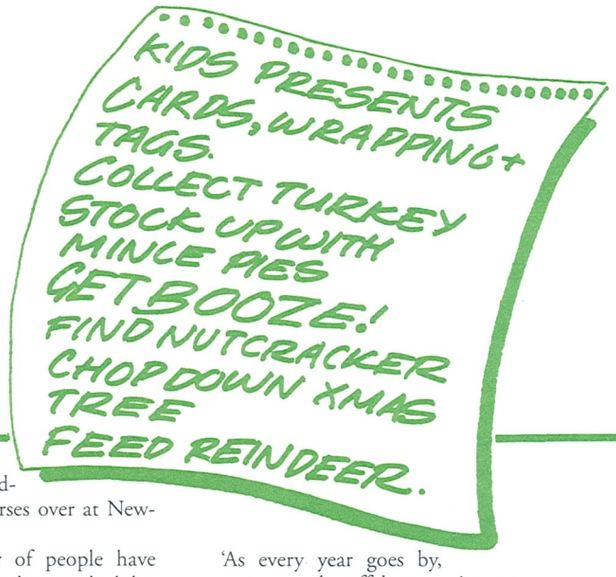
Flying high

You wouldn't buy a car without test driving it first, so why buy a computer without taking it through its paces? That's the thinking behind 'Test Flight', a promotion currently running in around 100 dealers' showrooms around the country.

Says Bob Coates: 'We believe the more people see our computers, the more they'll buy them. Through this promotion we hope to attract people into the showrooms where they can see and try out our equipment.'

As an added incentive, we're running a competition with truly outstanding prizes including a VIP trip on Concorde and flying lessons.

Shaping up for Christmas



If you're one of those who feel Christmas is so exhausting that you have to start training for it well in advance, perhaps you will be interested to know what Personnel have been up to this year on the training front.

If you still haven't done the Christmas shopping and are wondering whether you've still got time to buy, write and post your Christmas cards, perhaps you should have been on one of this year's Time Management Courses. This is apparently still our most popular course, much enjoyed by trainees and respected by managers who frequently say those who've attended show a marked improvement.

In all, there have been 16 Acorn-tailored training courses, including Managing Personal Growth and Project Management, plus around a dozen product-training courses run by Garry Neale over at Newmarket Road. 'But I wouldn't like Personnel to take all the credit for training', says Janet Henson-Webb. 'A great deal of initiative has been employed by people outside Personnel, and their ideas, commitment and hard work are much appreciated.'

In this category Janet includes David Slight's UNIX workshops and David Lowdell's presentation to technical staff on aspects of finance, as well as Andrew Payton's and Phil Colmer's contribution to creating and presenting product knowledge courses over at Newmarket Road.

A large number of people have already expressed an interest in joining the European languages group – and the calls and E-mail are still coming in. The group hopes to exchange tapes, books, videos, etc. and to improve their fluency by practising together.

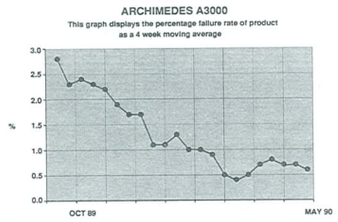
Janet says the aim is to make sure everyone has an opportunity to go on courses that are specifically tailored to their own requirements. She estimates that during the year Acorn has provided, or paid for, an average of two-and-a-half training days per employee.

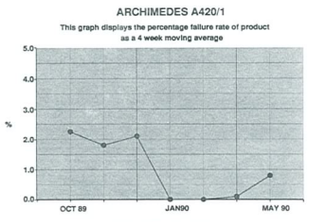
'As every year goes by, managers and staff become increasingly aware of and interested in training', says Janet. 'People used to regard an invitation to train as an insult, now they recognise training as an important element in their personal development and welcome it with enthusiasm.'

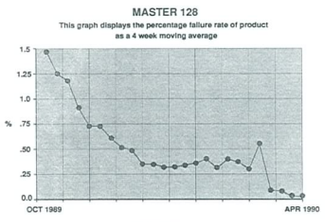
Copies of a selection of training course materials can be examined at either of the two training tables located outside the kitchen at Fulbourn Road and outside Malcolm Bird's office in Newmarket Road.

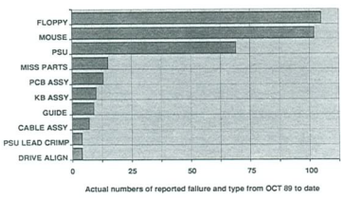
Signs of improvement . . .

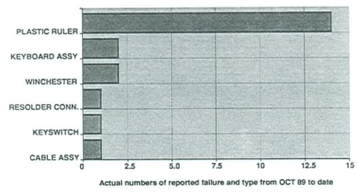
. . . although caution must be exercised when looking at these graphs because machines shipped in mid-1990 have not been in the field as long as those shipped in September 1989 – and therefore have not had such a long time to develop faults – the downward trend is most encouraging.

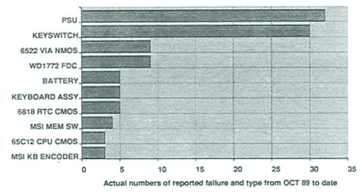












Attention all chocoholics

Forget the turkey and the mince pies. Where would Christmas be without chocolate. From the chocolate Santa hanging on the tree, to the box of chocolate liqueurs presented to Auntie Flo, Christmas wouldn't be the same without chocolate.

So when the chocolate comes out this year and the conversation's flagging, you'll be able to tell everyone that Archimedes 440 machines play an important role in chocolate making at Cadbury's cocoa bean processing factory.

'Cadburys', you can say, 'have implemented an innovative new system of plant mimics linked to programmable logic controllers (PLCs). Currently these are installed on cocoa milling, pressing, fat correction and solvent extraction. Based on powerful Acorn Archimedes 440 microcomputers, the new full colour mimics are created directly from CAD-generated engineering line diagrams.'

Not many people know that.

New names, new faces

Cambridge

Name	*Title*
David de Vorchick	Software Engineer
Owen Smith	Software Engineer
Charles Sturman	Design Engineer
Lee Windwood	Product Manager

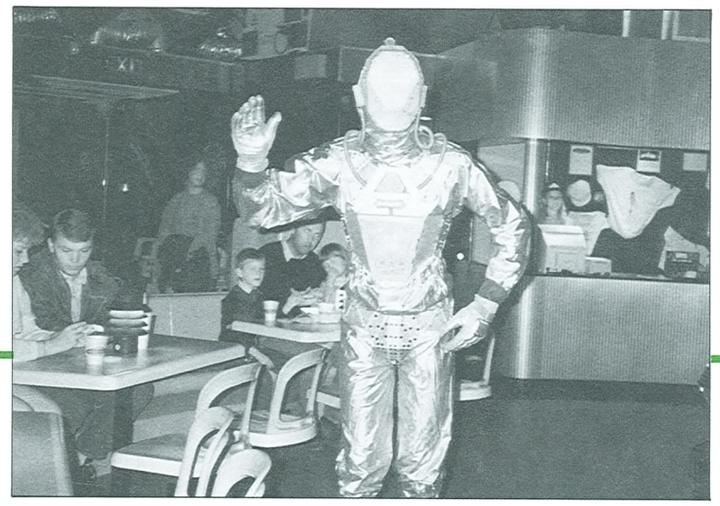
New Zealand

Bryan Falkner	Tertiary and Corporate Sales
Russell Layton	Education Adviser

Australia

Felicity Millicent Carter	Telephonist/Receptionist

Touch-down at Alconbury



Earthlings travelling along the A604 towards Peterborough might be intrigued by the silver flying saucer that appears to have landed outside RAF Alconbury. There's no need to be alarmed, it's only Princess Azzara's spaceship, Megatron.

Brainchild of Huntingdon property developer Danny Blundell, Megatron opened its doors to Earthlings in March this year. Once inside visitors are invited to choose a typical hyperspace dish from one of several touch screens located on a central console. Both the cash desk and kitchen are automatically notified of customers' selections and their food is cooked to order.

As you might have guessed, Acorn technology forms the basis of Megatron's computerised ordering system. But the computer console is merely one star in the Megatron galaxy. With the help of stunning laser effects synchronised with loud music, space-age waitress uniforms and a spectacularly fitted-out interior, you can almost believe you're in a real spaceship. And to complete the illusion, on weekends, you can meet Princess Azzara, her pet alien Fidjet and Robin the Robot.

And, according to Adriana Fionda, the restaurant's manageress, 'the restaurant offers all sorts of other possibilities. I'd like to see Megatron really take off and become a family name.'

Megatron is operated by a company called Aliens Limited. Clearly a business venture as unique as Megatron is bound to have a few teething problems, and, recognising this, Aliens Limited have decided not to promote the restaurant aggressively until they are confident that all the little hiccups have been completely cured. But if all goes according to plan the restaurant is bound to become a popular family venue and a successful business enterprise. The company is already planning Megatron 2 due for completion in 1991. ■

Mum's the word

What happens to bright young Acorn ladies who give it all up to have babies? How do they adapt to their new roles as mothers, and how do some of them manage to combine motherhood with an Acorn career? Acorn Newsletter decided to find out.

Katherine Abell left Acorn in July 1989 and her son was born the following September. 'Before Daniel arrived I thought I'd like to come back full time. But being at home with Daniel was wonderful and I decided I'd prefer a part-time job. Now I work at Acorn on a part-time contract basis three mornings a week.

Julie Dallywater

Michele Deal and Marion Sammons-King

'Every morning I take Daniel to a nursery in Chaucer Road. I put his name down before he was born, but I had to wait a whole year before they had a vacancy.'

Teresa Downey manages to combine a full-time career at Acorn with her new role as a mother. She left in November 1989 and James was born four weeks later.

'I managed to find a good childminder just across the road. This was very handy because I was able to feed him myself at lunchtimes. Because I'd decided to return to full-time work while James was still only a few weeks old, it was relatively easy for us both to get into a routine.

'I think I'm a better employee now. You know people think you won't be able to cope as well as you could before, so you put in more effort. And I think James benefits too. Because I enjoy my job, I'm a happier mum and better able to give him "quality time".

'On the down side, it's difficult to concentrate at work at first. And after work you've got a small, demanding person to look after all the time. Housework tends to go out of the window!'

Julie Dallywater worked as a sales co-ordinator in the International Department before leaving to have William. She hadn't planned to go back to work, but when William was three months old she noticed an advertisement for a part-time job close to her home in Alconbury.

'I'll be working as a clerical assistant in the National Curriculum Assessment Team. The hours are 10am to 2pm and I'll only be working during the school term. As my husband Charles is a teacher this will fit in very well. I would have liked to have returned to Acorn, but it's too far away from my home.'

Michele Deal now has two children. She left Acorn to have Aaron four years ago and returned to her job as a secretary in Marketing at the end of her maternity leave. This year she left again to have Natasha.

'Childcare is so expensive it wouldn't really be feasible for me to go back to work now that I have two children. Anyway, I'm happy at home. By the time you've had your second, you know what you're doing and you don't get so anxious about every little thing.'

Marion Sammons-King worked as Sam's secretary when he was Acorn's Financial and Commercial Director. After spending just over five years at Acorn and about ten years at work, Marion found it was difficult to

[*continued on back page*

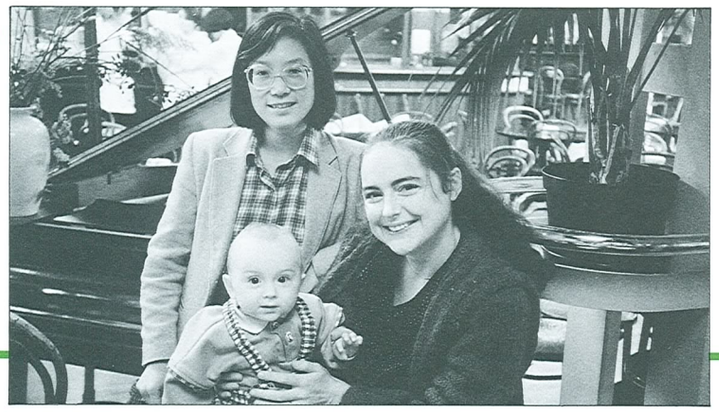
Goodbye Monopoly, Hello Jet Set

If we have our way this Christmas large numbers of Monopoly boxes will remain dust-covered and unopened this year because the family now has something much more exciting to play with.

'Jet Set' is a special computer package consisting of an A3000 plus four stunning programs including 'Interdictor' which is based on an RAF jet fighter flight simulator. The package also includes an applications suite (Draw, Edit, Paint, Maestro and other utilities) and a TV adaptor for connection to a standard domestic set instead of a special monitor.

At £749 including VAT, Jet Set costs rather more than the traditional board game, but is likely to be used all year round rather than just at Christmas and is therefore MUCH BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY!

Jet Set is being offered through ZCL which has many High Street outlets and a firm foothold in the consumer market. Says Bob Coates: 'We've high hopes for the product and the Commodore Amiga shortage won't do us any harm either!' ■



Katherine Abell and Teresa Downey

adapt to a completely new lifestyle. She's conscious that a new mother tends to be very wrapped up in her baby and if she's not careful, has nothing else to talk about.

'At first I didn't have any spare time to read newspapers or keep in touch with the world outside. But now Tom is a year old I'm getting out and about a lot more and making more time for myself.

'When Tom was six months old I went back to Acorn for 12 weeks to help out with organising a conference. Tom was looked after by his grandparents. I learned that even with a part-time job it can be difficult to get everything done at home and I also found out how tricky it is to set the rules if you farm your child out with family.

'Children can be really funny and you can't help laughing. The other day I found one of my shoes down the loo where Tom had decided to put it. He can be very naughty at times.' (Tom proved this during the interview by dropping his full beaker on sleeping William's head!)

'I'd like to go back to work as long as I can find something that will fit in with Tom. At the moment we're negotiating with the planning authorities in connection with a residential property in St. Ives which we hope to turn into an art and craft shop.'

Breakfast at BAFTA

In 1987, the Archimedes computer was launched at 195 Piccadilly, the home of the British Academy Film and Television Awards (BAFTA). This year the same prestigious venue was used for the spectacular launch of Academy, Acorn's multimedia computer-based training system.

After a series of presentations, guests were invited to see no less than 13 impressive demonstrations. For variety, we used a wide range of Acorn computers from the A3000 to the A540 and the R260, to indicate the system's capability and flexibility. The demonstrations included video digitising, audio and graphic digitising, compact disc, interactive video, 3D graphics, laser player and PC emulation.

At the heart of Academy is Avanti, a computer-based training (CBT) authoring system, developed by Westland System Assessment in Yeovil. Westland's technicians were suitably impressed with Archimedes' RISC chip, RISC OS windowing, ease of use, price and high performance, and both companies agreed to form a working relationship to create a CBT product, targeted at the UK and all international markets. This has been developed over two years, and runs exclusively on the Acorn RISC OS workstations.

The final product – Academy – was very well received at BAFTA headquarters where the audience included systems houses and end users, including those from industry, commerce and defence.

In equipment terms the show was as big as Which Computer and Simon Woodward and his team did a great job getting everything ready in time.

Commenting on the future for Academy, Warwick Hirst said, 'the potential for this product is very good indeed as the training market was worth £200 million this year in the UK alone and Academy is a truly international product'.

Sun and surf on Christmas Day

ACORN Australia staff obviously have a topsy-turvey view of the Christmas festive season.

A poll around the Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland offices finds that very few staff will be skiing, sitting in front of roaring log fires, or nursing the 'flu. The predominant activities seem to involve sun, sand and surf, according to Australian MD, Bob Moir.

Bob is setting the example, spending the break at his bayside beachhouse in Blairgowrie with wife Jackie and children.

The festive season starts on 14 December for Australian staff as both offices combine for an afternoon cruise up the Yarra River, lunching on lobster, prawns, oysters, Moreton Bay bugs and other varieties of seafood.

'This is the first chance all staff will have had to get together in person since the takeover', says Bob. 'We have had a lot of extra work to do with fewer bodies and this gives us a chance to say thank you.'

The Australian offices will then close between 21 December and 7 January, the 16-day break being used in various ways.

Gerry Howe of Sydney office will be travelling with son and husband Nigel to the south coast of New South Wales for a mix of surfing, fishing and bushwalking.

Michael (Nick) Etcell and Veena are heading up the coast in the other direction for a driving holiday. The most exotic holidayer is Tech Support Officer Alvi Fernandez, who is off to Uruguay (South America) to visit his family for eight weeks.

The most exotic holidaymaker in Melbourne is jetsetter Simon Thompson who is flipping up to Guam (in Micronesia) for a week. Simon, who doubles as National Service Manager, is 'into live volcanism' and his hobby is geology. While in Guam he will combine swimming, sunning and visiting live volcanoes.

It's a short time to go international, but Simon is expecting a deal of work to be waiting for servicing systems while the schools are on holidays.

Two members of Simon's team, Anthony Hills and Michelle Bradley, are heading off to Sydney for the break to see relatives and sample the surf at Bondi and Manly. A little bit of sailing on Sydney Harbour is also not out of the question according to Anthony.

But we are not totally alien down here, most of us will be having Christmas dinner with our immediate or extended families, and it will not be totally different to 'upover' land.

A sample shows that just over 40 per cent still have Xmas Pud (even if the temperature is 30°C in the shade), more than 50 per cent of households will have seasoned 'chook' or turkey, though nearly one-third of respondents will probably have it cold. Ham is also popular, and we nearly all have bonbons and funny hats, and there is a fair sample of candied fruit users.

There is also a strong group of supporters for lobster, prawns and salad for Xmas luncheon, with various mixes of the more traditional items.

What we wash it down with is a little more difficult. In Melbourne the weather varies. In fact we have a saying: 'You don't like Melbourne weather, then wait five minutes!'

If it is hot, beer could well be the major convivial beverage, with chilled Australian white wine a close second. Chillier weather calls for some gutsy reds, followed by a glass or three of port.

But whatever we drink, we'll all pause during the festivities and toast our cousins 'upover'.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

16-19 January:
BETT

24-30 January:
Academic Advice Roadshow

4-6 February:
Academic Advice Roadshow

21-27 February:
Academic Advice Roadshow

25-28 February:
Subject Advisory Teachers' Roadshow

4-6 March:
Academic Advice Roadshow

14-20 March:
Academic Advice Roadshow

12-16 March:
CEBIT

Contributions to 'Comment' via E-mail

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